

March 5, 2015

Dear Senator Terry Gerratana, Representative Dillon and Members of the Health committee:

Our son, Sean, is 14 years old. He is loving, active and very handsome. Unfortunately, he also has many special needs. He is unable to speak. He takes medication to control seizures. He has a movement disorder that makes him unsteady so he is unable to feed or dress himself without assistance. He needs a lot of assistance in the bathroom. Although his unsteadiness may cause him to trip and fall, Sean loves to run with little concern for safety. Therefore we must keep doors bolted and gates locked. As he enters adolescence and is unable to communicate properly, he also has become more frustrated and impulsive. He acts out by throwing any object within reach. In summary, Sean needs hands-on assistance at all times.

Sean also has two typical siblings, age 5 and 12. They have the usual music lessons, dance classes, sports teams and homework. Between Sean, his brother and sister and our feisty dog, life in our house is very busy! Trying to care for Sean and address his siblings' needs at the same time can be very overwhelming and stressful. Sean needs to be within sight or even within hands reach at all times. His needs often overshadow his siblings' needs.

Our lives changed 2 years ago when we first received in-home services from DDS. The stress level for the whole family has been reduced because everyone's need for attention, safety and respite are being met. Sean has a more content life of attending preferred activities rather than being carted around to his siblings' activities and having to wait impatiently with one of us in the car. Now while we are picking up the kids at school or bringing them to lessons or practices, Sean is being greeted off the bus by his aide, enjoying a snack and going for a ride to a place of his choice, such as the park. Sean's needs are met immediately, which also reduces his frustration behaviors. It also creates a safer environment for the whole family when someone is next to him at all times to intercept behavioral concerns. Sean can easily hurt himself or others when angry, but this is reduced when an aide is at his side to intercede. Also, Sean is a runner so if he managed to get out of the house he could easily run into the street or woods. Only a few minutes of unsupervised time could cost him his life.

It is very important to us that Sean lives with us and remains part of the family. As Sean gets older and stronger, this is only possible with the help of the in-home services. Any loss of our services would be devastating for our whole family.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie & Brendan Canning
Wallingford, CT